

Engorgement During Breastfeeding

(Full Hard Breasts)

In the first week after delivery, the milk becomes more abundant and the breasts feel fuller. Sometimes this change happens too quickly. As a result, the breasts may feel hard, tight, painful and warm to touch. Latching onto the breast may suddenly be too difficult for the baby.

PREVENT ENGORGEMENT

- ◆ Nurse the baby often, 8-12 times each 24 hours.
- ◆ Avoid formula or water in the early weeks unless instructed by the doctor.
- ◆ Avoid pacifiers in the first few weeks.

IF ENGORGEMENT OCCURS

- ◆ Cover all of both breasts with an ice pack for 3-4 minutes. (Put crushed ice cubes in a plastic bag or use a package of frozen peas wrapped in a wash cloth to make an ice pack.)
- ◆ Massage the breast, then hand express or pump out milk to soften the breast. This will make it easier to latch the baby on.
- ◆ Try nursing the baby to help empty the fullness. Pump after every nursing if breasts feel full.
- ◆ After nursing repeat the ice packs every 2-3 hours until the breasts are softer.
- ◆ If engorgement occurs during weaning, slow down the weaning process. Give yourself a chance to adjust.

MORE TO KNOW:

Hand expression can quickly soften the nipple area of the breast for a better latch.

- ▶ Apply warm wet wash cloths to get the milk to flow.
- ▶ Massage around the breast and nipple.
- ▶ Place the fingers and thumb behind the nipple 1 to 1 ½ inches back from the end.
- ▶ Push the fingers in toward the chest. Slowly press the thumb and fingers together.
- ▶ Move the position of the fingers and thumb around the breast to express all parts.
- ▶ Use a bowl or cup to collect the milk.

For more information call:



Adapted from the
Arkansas Department of
Health WIC Program.